

# PETRA STORRS

SCULPTURAL STRUCTURES, SHAPES AND THE FUTURE OF FASHION

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London-based artist and polymath Petra Storrs defies all artistic genres by assimilating set and prop design, stage costume design, illustration and myriad quirky works of the imagination. Her singular vision led to the unforgettable spectacle of singer Paloma Faith at a London show, whose umbrella-shaped mirror dress reflected the stage and captured headlines. Her originality, and her ability to morph materials such as paper, aluminum and note cards into elaborate props and editorial-ready attire is truly awe-inspiring. Her original paperwork has been featured in fashion editorials the world over; in music videos for zeitgeist-defining acts such as Florence and the Machine, Friendly Fires, Ipso Facto, Patrick Wolf and MGMT—all artists who have fallen for her cutting edge DIY aesthetic. Even in troubled economic waters she refuses to let her creative dreams be sunk by a bunch of drowning fat cats, and reminds us that if there was ever a time to rip up the rule book and start again, this is it.

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*It is rare for eco, organic and sustainable fashion to be elegant and conceptual. Talk me through the concept behind your works.* I often work in paper because it is very immediate and gives you license to experiment, almost like a maquette, or a three-dimensional drawing—a blueprint of how it might be. A good deal of my work is for the photographic industry, it really only needs to last for a few days until it is captured in a picture. My work just happens to be relatively organic and sustainable, but that's not my primary aim; I'm more concerned with creating and making objects I find beautiful or interesting.

*How do you feel you are coping with the recession? Do you think it affects the way you design and your creativity?* I'm not feeling very affected by the recession because I live in a little bubble, and I don't have expensive taste or use expensive materials. A lot of the things I use in my work are found on the streets around my house. I'm forever making people help me carry things back to my studio. I'm a bit of a hoarder.

*What's exciting in fashion right now?* I was looking back through old fashion magazines from the '90s yesterday and was really shocked by how far fashion has changed and developed since then. I'm most excited by designers like Basso and Brooke, Alexander McQueen and Hussein Chalayan.

*Who and what inspires your amazing designs?* Everything and anything; lots of sculptural shapes and

structures and architecture—my influences are normally more sculptural. I like building structures and shapes and then applying them to fashion. A great deal of my inspiration comes from browsing in hardware shops and watching films. I'm also really interested in pictures from *National Geographic* and the series *Planet Earth*. I love all the tiny underwater creatures and small insects such as beetles and bugs—they are extraordinarily iridescent, brightly patterned and beautiful.

*There is a lot of intricacy and folding in your work, how long does it take to make each piece?*

It's massively time consuming. But I think I'm getting faster. When I have to give a time estimate for a quote I always try to work it out then double it and that always seems to work out right.

*Any stand-out projects?*

The Mirror Dress is my favorite project so far I think. It was a collaboration with singer Paloma Faith. She's so theatrical and such a wonderful performer. The dress really comes alive; its curved surfaces are completely reflective so it almost looks like liquid as Paloma moves around the stage.

*What can we expect from forthcoming collaborations?*

There's lots more to come with Paloma Faith, and that's really exciting for me. I'm also about to start a project with an amazing artist, Rosie Emerson, who paints all the beautiful ladies you see on wallpaper pasted around London. I also have an upcoming project with performance artist Ryan Styles, and I'm working on my own collection of clothes and accessories for September.

*With such unique designs, if you could choose anyone to wear them, who would it be and why?*

Well the biggest part of the challenge is creating the right costume for the particular performer. It's best if it's completely amalgamated into their show. I would love to make costumes for a fantastical short film. I'm really inspired by films like *The Fall*, *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Black Cat*, *White Cat*.

*As an up and coming creative voice in London, where do you think you get most of your support, and what kind of hurdles have you come across?*

I get all my support from my friends, but other than that, I think London is a tough city. Most people I know in a similar position as me are just making it up as they go along. We're driven by the fear that it has to work as we wouldn't be employable to anyone else.

